

## Jude

The letter of Jude begins with the author expressing his desire to talk about how amazing is the salvation that they have in common, but upon hearing of the false teachers that have infiltrated the church, he has to shift gears. The letter is an impassioned plea to resist the false doctrines of the vile and corrupt teachings of false teachers and to return to the salvation message that was originally preached to them.

The overwhelming majority of scholars see the author as Jude (Judas), the brother of Jesus (Matt. 13:55; Mark 6:3) and of James (Jude 1; Acts 15:13). Like James, he was a Hellenized Galilean Jew who wrote with a cultivated Greek style. Because Jude references the First Testament so much, it is likely that his audience is largely Jewish Christians. From the letter it is clear that they have allowed false teachers to enter their gatherings and are beginning to entertain the legitimacy of their false teachings.

Dating the letter of Jude is challenging. It is thought by many scholars that Jude was written before 2 Peter and that Peter used Jude's letter in order to write his second letter. It is thought that 2 Peter was written before 68 AD. Peter would have needed enough time to receive Jude's letter, read it, and then write his own. This would date Jude a little before 60 AD.<sup>1</sup>

### Purpose

The letter of Jude is a letter intended to encourage the believers to ground their faith in the written documents of the growing church, rather than listen to the corrupted gospel of the false teachers. The letter of Jude illustrates the necessity of clinging to the authority of scripture as opposed to those who claim to be prophets.

The opponents that Jude is refuting are antinomian in their theology (Rom. 3:8; 6:1, 15; Gal. 5:13), which means that they misunderstand the grace of God in Christ (Jude 4) as deliverance from external moral constraints. God's grace for the believers through Jesus Christ is, they believe, so great that they can live however they want and be free from condemnation. Therefore, they reject all moral authority including the Law of Moses (Jude 8-10) and of Christ (Jude 4, 8), even though they claim to be followers of Christ. So the one who possesses the Spirit (Jude 19) becomes the only judge of his own actions (Jude 9), subject to no authority.

Some believe that these false teachers are Gnostics.<sup>2</sup> But this is not likely since the false teachers have no sense of cosmic dualism between a good spiritual God of light and an evil god of the material realm. Even though they speak degradingly of angels who gave us the Law, there is no evidence that they see these angels as evil creators and lords of the material realm.

Jude has woven into his letter a number of references from Jewish literature that were not accepted into the canon of Christian Scripture. The first significant writing is 1 Enoch, which is ascribed to Enoch, the great-grandfather of Noah (Gen. 5:21-24). Most scholars date the earlier

---

<sup>1</sup> See Peter H. Davids. *The Letter of 2 Peter and Jude*, p. 12; and Richard J. Bauckman. *Jude, 2 Peter*, p. 13.

<sup>2</sup> Gnosticism is a first- to third-century religion that taught that the spiritual realm was the only true realm and that humans were fallen gods trapped in the material realm. The true God is an unknowable, spiritual god of light (the god of the Second Testament) who emanated many spiritual, angelic beings into the universe. Out of these beings came the demiurge (the god of the First Testament), an evil megalomaniac who created the material realm and trapped sparks of light from the spiritual God of light in human bodies in the material realm to be his slaves. Thus, the material realm is evil, and humans must escape their bodies and the material realm by obtaining secret esoteric knowledge and thereby rejoin the god-force of light.

chapters to about 300 BC and the later part (Book of Parables) to the first century BC. In Jude 6, he refers to the fallen angels called the Watchers in 1 Enoch 6-12. And he quotes 1 Enoch 1:9 in Jude 14. Many passages in 1 Enoch serve as the background for comments throughout his letter.

The second writing is The Testament (Assumption) of Moses, which is a first century AD writing that claims to contain the secret prophecies Moses revealed to Joshua before passing the leadership of the Israelites to him. Jude makes reference to the burial of Moses' body in Jude 6.

1 Peter 3:18-22 and 2 Peter 2:4 use 1 Enoch as well for the basis of their topic. Because of these references, many early Church fathers claimed that 1 Enoch especially should be canonized. However, they were never accepted by the Church because of their late dating and lack of verification of authorship. Though many Christians do not accept these books as Scripture, they do accept that they are beneficial for understanding Jewish thought and Second Testament cultural and theological background.

Though we may never know what Jude truly thought of these books, the way in which he quotes 1 Enoch marks them as authoritative since he places them alongside and on the same level with the other canonical and apostolic texts. Similarly, it may not be clear what Jude thought about 1 Enoch as a whole book or whether it should be a part of the Christian canon of Scripture; what is clear is that by Jude using stories and ideas from 1 Enoch, which would have been familiar to his readers, he is saying they do contain truth that is worth quoting in order to make his point. All truth is God's truth, whether found in or outside of the Bible.

## Outline

- I. Contending for the Faith (1-4)
- II. The Condemnation of the False Teachers (5-16)
  - A. First Testament Group Types of Condemnation (5-10)
  - B. First Testament Individual Types of Condemnation (11-13)
  - C. The Prophecy of Enoch (14-16)
- III. Exhortation to the Faithful (17-25)

## I. Contending for the Faith (1-4)

Jude quickly begins a very harsh condemnation of the false teachers who are among the believers and the need to drive these men from their presence. The focus of this section is to encourage the believers to remain faithful to the doctrine of the gospel message that was given to them.

**1** There is very little disagreement among scholars that Jude was the biological brother of Jesus. Yet Jude does not mention this connection because he does not want to claim authority based merely on a blood relationship with Jesus. Instead, he sees himself as a slave to Jesus Christ. Many translations translate the Greek word *doulos* as “servant,” but this word does not carry the idea of a free individual serving another. This word is used of one who is not free and who has been enslaved to another or has sold himself into slavery. Unlike in American history, there were many types of slavery, and not all were as bad as slavery was in America. Some people chose to become slaves in order to pay off debts. In fact, if one were a slave in a politically powerful family, like Caesar’s, then the slave’s status was actually higher than that of a free person. Jude sees Christ as the ultimate master of whom he is a slave, in that he has surrendered his will to Christ. Yet Christ is a good and loving master who bought Jude with His own life. And Jude’s status in heaven as a slave to Christ is greater than his status as a free person in the world. This concept is also seen Rom. 1:1; Phil 1:1; James 1:1; Gal. 1:10; 2 Pet. 1:1; Col. 4:12; 2 Tim. 2:24; 1 Cor. 7:22; Eph. 6:6. Thus Jude sees his authority and calling to serve the Lord.

The phrase “to those who are called” is a concept transferred from the First Testament (Isa. 41:9; 42:6; 48:12, 15; 49:1; 54:6; Hos. 11:1) that linked God’s choice or election of Israel (Isa. 41:8, 9; 42:1; 43:10; 44:1, 2; 49:7) to Jude’s Christian readers. Thus Jude is connecting his readers’ salvation found in Jesus Christ to the promises of Yahweh found in Israel as the chosen people. This salvation he will mention in Jude 3. Jude’s calling and their status as chosen is based on the love of God that has been wrapped around them and demonstrated in the cross of Jesus Christ.

**2** God has specifically given the believers mercy, peace, and love and in great abundance. Mercy is the steadfast love of God and is the divine attitude of kindness toward His covenant people, who do not deserve mercy under the Law. Peace is the well-being that results from knowing and experiencing the mercy of God. Love is the demonstration of God’s mercy found in the cross of Jesus Christ. It is interesting that the gift of love is not found in any other Jewish salutation.

Jude reminds his readers of their position in God their Father and Jesus their Savior before he rebukes the teachings of the false teachers among them, who are competing for their devotion. The false teachers have not accomplished or offered that which God has done for them, so one should not be persuaded by the false teachers.

**3** Jude begins by stating that he had wanted to write to his readers to further develop the salvation God has offered, but because false teachers have been allowed into their community he has to deal with that issue, for it is bringing the judgment of God into their community. By referring to salvation as “our common salvation,” Jude brings out the corporate nature of salvation understood by Judaism, which is the consciousness of being God’s people and the conviction of fellowship in Christ.<sup>3</sup> The false teachers are emphasizing their individual rights and desire to follow their own hearts rather than the fellowship of Christ that is found in the community of His children.

---

<sup>3</sup> See Richard J. Bauckman. *Jude, 2 Peter*, p. 31.

Jude and Paul's use of "contending for the faith" does not refer to the Stoic metaphor of life as a moral contest but rather the struggle against opposition to spreading the gospel.<sup>4</sup> The best parallel to how Jude is using this phrase is Phil. 1:27-30. It is not a defense but an offense promoting the gospel's advance and victory. Nor is it just a verbal affirmation and debate but a way of life, which is faithful to the gospel (Phil. 1:27; 1 Tim. 6:11; Heb. 10:32-34). Jude's concept also includes his exhortations in Jude 20-21. He is not just urging his readers to oppose the false teachers, but he also wants them to actively live the Christian life in service to the gospel.<sup>5</sup> Remaining faithful to the moral demand of God and resisting antinomianism are ways to fight for the gospel.

This faith has been entrusted to the church by the apostles who walked with Jesus Christ. The doctrines have been given to them by trustworthy apostles and have been accepted by the greater Church for a long time, unlike the teachings of the false teachers who have not walked with Christ, are new on the scene, and have not been tested and accepted by the greater Church.

**4** False teachers have slipped in among the people as predicted by Peter (2 Pet. 2:1; Acts 20:29-30) with the desire to deceive, not to encourage and build up. According to Jude, God has marked these false teachers for destruction long ago. The phrase *long ago* can mean either "long ago" or just "in the past," as in the recent past.<sup>6</sup> Some interpret this to mean that God has already recorded their condemnation in the heavenly books (Rev. 20:12). But most likely Jude is saying that the false teachers and their condemnation were prophesied in the First Testament or in the book of Enoch, that their arrival and their beliefs were already predicted and condemned by the prophets. This view makes more sense in the greater context of the book, which constantly goes back to the First Testament in order to illustrate the condemnation of the false teachers.

Their specific condemnation either looks back to Jude 3, the previous verse, which condemns the teachers and their violation of orthodoxy and the church for allowing them to come into their community; or it looks forward to the rest of Jude 4, which is a direct condemnation of the false teachers themselves and their motives.

Jude then specifically lists two sins of the false teachers. First, they have used the grace of God found in Jesus Christ as an excuse to do whatever they want and to declare that they will not be judged for their evil desires and behavior. This is called antinomianism, wherein they have declared the law of God as being invalid and not applying to them. Second, in their denial of the need to obey, they are denying the lordship of Jesus Christ over creation and our lives.

Jude is not condemning the false teachers in order to assure his readers that this is all happening according to God's plan. Rather, his point is that the false teachings and his readers' acceptance of these false teachers puts them into a group of people who, according to Scriptures, will come under God's wrath and condemnation. Therefore, they must resist the false teachers and their teachings.

---

<sup>4</sup> See V. C. Pfitzner, *Paul and the Agon Motif* [NovTSup 16; Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1967] chap 3.

<sup>5</sup> See Richard J. Bauckman. *Jude, 2 Peter*, p. 32.

<sup>6</sup> See Richard J. Bauckman. *Jude, 2 Peter*, p. 35-37.

## II. The Condemnation of the False Teachers (5-16)

This section is the heart of the letter, wherein Jude systematically lays out the wrath and judgment of God that is awaiting the false teachers for their blatant arrogance and disregard for the moral commands of God and Jesus Christ. He spends considerable time giving many examples from the First Testament of others who thought they could seize autonomy and were eventually brought under the wrath of God for their blatant rebellion and rejection of God and His moral commands. Thus, the false teachers of Jude's day can expect the same wrath of God to come upon them.

### A. First Testament Group Types of Condemnation (5-10)

Jude begins by listing three First Testament examples of sin and rebellion against God and His law and how God then judged them for their violation of His law (Jude 5-7). These judgments become types for the final judgment at the second coming of Jesus Christ. Jude will then show how arrogant their sense of moral superiority and autonomy is by showing that not even the angels of God see themselves as above the authority and moral commands of God.

**5** The first of Jude's three examples refers to Num. 14 and is about the wilderness generation's rebellion against God after He had saved them from Egypt. On the first occasion, the people had accepted the sacrifice and deliverance God had provided them, but when it came to obeying them and entering the Promised Land, they chose to rebel. On the second occasion, God judged them for their rebellion and what they had done with His salvation. Jude's reference shows that he did believe the false teachers to be apostate Christians. This First Testament judgment of forbidding the Promised Land to those who rejected the salvation of the exodus becomes a type for the Second Testament eschatological judgment of those who reject the salvation of Jesus Christ.

**6** Jude's second example refers to the demonic angels that God condemned, throwing them into the abyss for abandoning their proper place and coming to earth in order to take human women ("the daughters of men") to be their wives (Gen. 6:1-4). Genesis 6:2 refers to them as the Sons of God, which is a title in the Bible that refers only to angels—*bene elim* (1 Sam. 2:12; 25:17, 25; Ps. 29:1; 89:6; 103:20) and *bene elohim* (Deut. 14:1; Job 1:6; 2:1; 38:7; Hos. 1:10; 11:1). 2 Pet. 2:4-5, which refers to the same judgment as Jude 6, states that these angels were thrown into the abyss during the time of Noah (1 Pet. 3:19-20; 2 Pet. 2:4; perhaps 1 Cor. 11:10; 1 Tim. 2:9). And Jude 6-7 states that they were thrown into the abyss for the same sexual immorality that Sodom and Gomorrah committed.

*The Sons of God* was universally understood in Judaism as angels until the mid-second century AD (1 Enoch 6-19; 21; 86-88; 106:13-15; Jub. 4:15, 22; 5:1). In Christianity, this understanding was not questioned until the late third century and disappeared in the fifth century. 1 Enoch 6-7, an extra-biblical text written between the First and Second Testaments, specifically calls these fallen angels the Watchers and details their taking of the "daughters of men" from Gen. 6:1-4. The fact that Jude alludes to 1 Enoch many times in his letter (which will be discussed in the following pages) and that he specifically quotes 1 Enoch 1:9 in Jude 14 shows that Jude has this understanding of the Sons of God in mind.

The angels have been judged for two sins. First, they disobeyed God and "abandoned their proper home" (1 Enoch 12:4; 15:3). This is emphasized by the fact that God has "kept" them in chains, which is a way of describing a sin and its judgment in corresponding terms so that the

judgment fits the crime (1 Cor. 3:17; Rev. 16:6).<sup>7</sup> The second is their violation of God's moral law with their sexual immorality (Jude 7). The point is that they rebelled against God's law, and He condemned them for it.

**7** The last of the three examples is of Sodom and Gomorrah and of God's destruction because of their sexual immorality (Gen. 19). Sodom and Gomorrah are specifically condemned for going after "strange flesh"—flesh that is different from the antecedent; thus, it cannot refer to homosexuality, wherein the flesh is the same. It must refer to the angels that were in Lot's house (T. Napht. 3:4-5).

In Jewish tradition, the sin of Sodom and Gomorrah is rarely seen as homosexual sin but as a violation of hospitality (Wis. 19:14-15; Josephus, Ant. 1:194), as selfishness (Gen. 13:13; 18:20; Ezek. 16:49-50; 3 Macc. 2:5), or as sexual immorality in general (Jub. 16:5-6; 20:5; T. Levi 14:6; T. Benj. 9:1).

Jude states that the fallen angels of Jude 6 (Gen. 6:1-4) also went after "strange flesh," which would refer to the "daughters of men" in Gen. 6:1-4. Jude stresses the sexual offense of the Watchers and the Sodomites in order to emphasize the blatant character of the false teachers' violation of God's moral order.

Jude refers to them being in the "eternal fire," which means that the charred remains of the cities are in a way still burning, giving a warning picture of the eternal fires of hell. Sodom and Gomorrah burning became the imagery for future judgment (Deut. 29:23; Isa. 34:9-10; Jer. 49:17-18; Ezek. 38:32; Rev. 14:10-11; 19:3; 20:10).

With these prominent First Testament examples, Jude makes it clear that those who think that God's moral law does not apply to them and that they can pursue any desire they want and not be judged are mistaken, for God always condemns those who violate His Law without repenting from their actions.

**8** Jude accuses the false teachers of getting their false doctrine from dreams. These dreams are associated with the medium of prophetic revelation, and this word is used of the dreams of the false prophets (Deut. 13:2, 4, 6; Isa. 56:10; Jer. 23:25, 32; 36:8; Zech. 10:2). The point is that that their teachings do not come from God or the teachings of Jesus Christ. There is no historical or biblical backing along with the test of time to validate their teachings. These dreams have led the false teachers to defile their flesh, reject the authority of God and the apostolic teachings, and insult the glorious ones.

First, the false teachers have used their own authority to justify their sexual immorality. The Greco-Roman world had no real sense of sexual morality, and most likely the false teachers have maintained these sexual practices as they have entered into Christianity and then used the grace of the cross and their dreams to justify their behavior. 1 Enoch repeatedly refers to the sin of the fallen Watchers as "defiling themselves" with women (1 Enoch 7:1; 9:8; 10:11; 12:4; 15:3, 4). Thus Jude is connecting the behavior of the false teachers with that of the demonic world.

Second, they then reject the moral commands of God concerning sexual behavior, which are repeated over and over throughout the Bible. This is the most severe offense because they reject God's sovereignty over creation and assume that their authority is greater than His as revealed in His Scriptures.

---

<sup>7</sup> See Richard J. Bauckman. *Jude, 2 Peter*, p. 53.

*Glorious ones* refers to angelic beings and not human beings, just as it is used in 2 Pet 2:10. This cannot refer to evil angels because it would be unlikely that Jude would have reacted so strongly to insulting demonic angels, especially when there is no idea in the Bible that evil angels should be treated with respect. The fact that they are speaking negatively about angels is unique in the Second Testament (2 Pet. 2:10), for usually when false teachers receive dreams and visions, it produces excessive reverence for angels (Col. 2:18; Rev. 19:10; 22:8). The false teachers are insulting God's angels, who mediated the Law of God (Deut. 33:2; Acts. 7:38, 53; Heb. 2:2) and who are the guardians of the created order. Their insulting of the angels is an expression of their superiority over God's Law and His order of the universe, for they have received their own visions (1 Cor. 6:3).

**9** Here Jude quotes *The Testament of Moses* (also known as *The Assumption of Moses*), which is a first-century Jewish apocryphal pseudepigraphical work, which claims to be the secret prophecies of Moses revealed to Joshua before Moses passed down the leadership of the Israelites. It is important to understand that by Jude quoting this book he is not saying that this text should be considered canonical Scripture but rather that this portion he quotes is truth (all truth is God's truth). Jude quotes from the part of the book detailing Moses' burial. Deut. 34:5-6 states that though Moses was refused entry into the Promised Land, he was granted the privilege of burial by God Himself in an unknown place. Many Jewish legends arose of what happened to Moses after his death and where was he buried. One of these was recorded in *The Testament of Moses* and claims that the devil tried to prevent the hidden burial of Moses in order to make the location known to the Jewish people so that they would be tempted into worshiping the body of Moses. The archangel Michael resisted the devil's desire to take the body, while the devil made a case for why Moses was unworthy of such an honor, accusing him of murdering the Egyptian (Ex. 2:12). Jude quotes the part of the text where Michael did not see himself as a rightful judge over Moses and called upon God as the true judge over the devil, Moses, and himself, after which he took the body and hid it as God had instructed. The phrase "the Lord rebuke you" comes from Zech. 3:2, where God rebukes Satan after he accuses Joshua of not being worthy of being the high priest because of his sin. The point of this account is that Michael was an advocate and not a judge. He did not take it upon himself to reject the devil's accusation as malicious slander but rather appealed to God's judgment.

The false teachers claim that the angels only enforced the Law of God because of their malicious intent towards humanity. The contrast between Michael and the false teachers is not that Michael treated the devil with respect but that he could not, on his own authority, reject the devil's claim. No one is a law unto themselves. Even if it were true that the only reason that the Law condemned them was because evil and malicious angels were falsely using the Law against them, they still are not justified in rejecting the accusation based on their own authority. Even if they were as righteous as the angels and Moses, they are not above the Law nor free from accusation of sin under the Law. Not even Michael the archangel of God saw himself as above the Law.<sup>8</sup>

**10** Jude accuses the false teachers of being ignorant of the universe of God, and thus they will be destroyed by their ignorance. They are merely lowly, unreasoning animals, which corresponds to the defiling of the flesh in Jude 8. Though they claim to be guided by higher knowledge from spiritual insights, they are merely following their sexual instincts, which they share with animals.

---

<sup>8</sup> See Richard J. Bauckman. *Jude, 2 Peter*, p. 61.

## B. First Testament Individual Types of Condemnation (11-13)

Whereas in verses 5-10 Jude compared the false teachers with three groups of sinners, he now compares them with three notorious individual sinners. And as was true of the previous groups, these three individuals also did not escape the wrath of God for their rebellion against God. Jude ends by stating that these false teachers make a lot of promises but fail to deliver.

**11** First, Jude compares the false teachers with Cain, who was so evil he ignored the warning of God, went against God's warnings, and killed his own brother (Gen. 4:1-18). Jewish literature often saw Cain as the chief archetype of sinners (1 John 3:12). The false teachers followed in Cain's footsteps by imitating his sin (2 Chron. 11:17; 21:6; Ezek. 23:31), as they oppose the law and follow their own hearts.

Second, Jude compares the false teachers with the greedy Balaam, who went against the direct command of God and was willing to destroy the chosen people of God because of his love of money (Num. 22:18; 24:13; 31:16; Deut. 23:4; Neh. 13:2; Rev. 2:12). Balaam was a prophet hired by Balak king of Moab to curse Israel. However, God would not allow him and instead caused him to bless Israel. Rather than heeding the sovereignty of God and following Him, Balaam told Balak to seduce Israel sexually with the temple prostitutes of Moab. He did this so that he could still get paid. Eventually he was killed in battle as a judgment from God (Num. 31:8; Josh. 13:21-22). The word *error* has the idea of wandering from the path (Matt. 27:64; 2 Thess. 2:11). These false teachers have chosen monetary power as their motivation rather than a desire to love God by expanding the kingdom of Yahweh. Although a prophet has the right to be supported by the churches (1 Cor. 9:4), he is not to abuse this, and money is not to become his motivation for service (Rom. 16:18; 1 Tim. 6:5; Titus 1:11). *Error* is used regularly to describe the activity of the false prophets of the last days (Matt. 24:4-5, 11, 24; 1 Tim. 4:1; 2 Tim. 3:13; 1 John 4:6; Rev. 2:20; 13:14).<sup>9</sup>

Jude's third comparison is Korah, a Levite who rebelled against Moses and Aaron's authority even though they had been appointed by God (Num. 16:1-35; 26:9-10; Ps. 106:16-18). God condemned Korah by causing the ground to open up and swallow him.

**12** Jude warns that these false teachers present a danger to his readers at the love feasts. The love feast is synonymous with the Lord's supper (2 Pet. 2:13; Acts. 2:44-46; 1 Cor. 11:20-34). This is a sacred time where the community fellowships with each other in Christ, but they have turned it into a dangerous snare for the weak Christians. The Greek word *spilades* is often translated "blemishes." However, the Greek word for "blemishes" is *spiloi*, which is similar to *spila*, the root of the word *spilades*. Some say Jude misspelled the word and meant *blemish*, especially since this is how it is used in 2 Pet. 2:13. It is unlikely that Jude, with his excellent grasp of Greek, misspelled a word, and the context does not fit the idea of the false teachers being a blemish on the love feasts. *Spilades* is usually translated "rock" or "reef." With this meaning, the false teachers look like a pillar in the community, but as one gets closer, they become like a rock jutting out to wreck ships and lives and causing them to stumble (Isa. 8:14-15; Matt. 13:41; 16:23). This meaning fits better with the word that Jude chose, as well as the context of the following metaphors that describe the false teachers as a danger. They do not feed the community with good teaching, nor do they fellowship with the community, but rather they use

---

<sup>9</sup> See Richard J. Bauckman. *Jude, 2 Peter*, p. 90.



the meals greedily to feed themselves. As teachers, they then set the example to others that the love feasts are merely for filling one's belly.

*Waterless clouds* is a metaphor from Prov. 25:14. It describes the false teachers as dark clouds that bring no life-giving rain to benefit the people's growth. They have no real direction or compass guiding them but merely are carried by the haphazard winds.

They are like autumn trees at the end of the harvest, when they should be bearing fruit, but there is none to be found. Israel and Christians are often associated with trees and bearing fruit (Ps. 52:5; Prov. 2:22; Wis. 4:4; Matt. 3:10; Luke 3:9; Matt. 7:19; Luke 13:9; Matt. 15:13). Jesus associated Israel with the fruitless fig tree (Matt. 21:18-22; Luke 13:6-9) and cursed it because it did not bear fruit. By referring to them as twice dead, he is condemning them to the second death, which is the final judgment of being thrown into the lake of fire (Rev. 2:11; 20:6, 14; 21:8). The only thing left is to uproot them and throw them into the fire of judgment (Matt. 3:10; 7:19; John 15:2, 6).

**13** The false teachers are like wild waves that are chaotic and only throw mud and sand in your face. This reference to the waves is based on Isa. 57:20. The foam and mud come from their shame or abominations. It is not clear if this is their shameful deeds or words. Unlike the previous analogies, where the trees and clouds promised good things but produce nothing, the waves produce something that is grossly unlike the teaching and behavior of the true Christian prophet. Instead of building one up, it defiles them.

*Wandering stars* comes from 1 Enoch 82 (1 Enoch 18:13-16; 21:3-6 or 1 Enoch 80). In the ancient Near East, the irregular movements of the planets and stars were connected to the disobedience of heavenly beings, and meteorites falling were connected to fallen heavenly beings (Isa. 14:12-15; Rev. 8:10; 9:1). Thus, the false teachers are no different from the fallen angels who rebelled, and they will end up in the depths of the abyss just like the demonic angels of Gen. 6:1-4 (2 Pet. 2:4; Jude 6). In 1 Enoch, damnation meant fire, and the Jews also understood it as darkness (Tobit 14:10; 1 Enoch 46:6; 63:6; Pss. Sol. 14:9; 15:10; Matt. 8:12; 22:13; 25:30). The two images were also sometimes combined (1 Enoch 103:8; 108:14; Sib. Or. 4:43; 2 Enoch 10:2). This is in contrast with true Christians, who will shine like the stars (Dan. 12:3).

### C. The Prophecy of Enoch (14-16)

Jude ends his condemnation of the false teachers with a prophecy from Enoch, the seventh descendant of Adam in Gen. 5:21-24. His point here is to make it clear that God long ago foretold through his prophets the condemnation of all those who stand blatantly against Him.

**14-15** Jude now specifically quotes 1 Enoch 1:9, which is the only time that Jude directly cites the one he is quoting. Again, just because Jude sees the words in 1 Enoch as inspired by God does not mean he regarded the book as canonical Scripture. The Lord coming with his myriad of holy ones is a reference to God coming with his angelic army to either bring the Law (Deut. 33:2) or to bring judgment (Zech. 14:5). Jude reminds his readers that it has been prophesied that God will come one day to judge and condemn all those who seized autonomy and rebelled against the Law of God (Deut. 33:2; Ps. 68:17; Isa. 40:10; 66:15; Mic. 1:3; Zech. 14:5). This is a constant theme all throughout the Bible, from the flood, the Tower of Babel, Sodom and Gomorrah, the conquest of the Canaanites, the exile of Israel, and to the second coming of Jesus Christ in Revelation. Do not believe people when they say that God is only a God of love who will not punish sin because Christ has died for all. Christ's death does not bring an end to the judgment of God but rather allows one to escape the judgment if they trust, obey, and repent. Most of the Second Testament's thinking about Christ's second coming did not come from applying to Jesus the First Testament texts concerning the messiah, rather from studying the First Testament texts about the coming of God and His kingdom.<sup>10</sup> Christ is combined with these ideas because He is God's Son.

**16** The reference to grumbling or murmuring is to the Israelites of the wilderness generation, who grumbled against God despite His salvation and disputed His authority over their lives (Ps. 95:8). Just like that generation, who knew the salvation of Christ, the false teachers grumble against Christ's moral commands and righteous living and claim their own moral authority to do what they want and follow their hearts. They then use their charisma and clever speeches to deceive others into following them in their grumbings, just as the wilderness generation did to those around them. Moreover, the false teachers deceive and enchant others into following them for their own gain and not to bring life to the community of believers.

---

<sup>10</sup> See Richard J. Bauckman. *Jude, 2 Peter*, p. 97.

### III. Exhortation to the Faithful (17-23)

Jude ends his letter by warning his readers not to follow the teachings of the false teachers, for they will follow in the same condemnation that awaits the false teachers if they do. He encourages them to hold to the true doctrines of the gospel message brought to them and to press on in the faith that leads to true mercy and life in Jesus Christ.

**17-19** Jude does not turn from denouncing the false teachers to encouraging the faithful. Rather, he continues to explain that the false teachers are the ones of whom the prophets warned, for his intention is that his readers heed these warnings and stop following the false teachers lest they end up in the same judgment as the false teachers. These people are not led by the Holy Spirit but by their own selfish desires, and so they bring only division and turmoil. Jude encourages them to hold to the teachings of the apostles, which have stood the test of time in the churches and offer life and joy.

**20-21** In contrast to the nature and behavior of the false teachers, the believers are to build each other up in the faith (Rom. 14:19; 15:2, 20; 1 Cor. 3:9-15; 8:1; 10:23; 14:3-5, 12, 17, 26; 2 Cor. 10:8; 12:19; 13:10; Gal. 2:9, 18; Eph. 2:18; 2:20-22; 4:12, 16; Col. 2:7; 1 Thess. 5:11). They are to do this through three means. First is by praying in the Holy Spirit, which usually means in control of the Spirit or under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit (Matt. 22:43; Mark 12:36; Luke 2:27; 4:1; Acts 19:21; Rom. 8:9; 1 Cor. 12:3; Rev. 1:10; 4:2). The idea is to not be led or controlled by your own desires but to be led and controlled by the Spirit of God.

Second, they are to maintain each other in the love of God, which brings unity and fellowship, not elitism and divisiveness.

Third, they are to anticipate the mercy of God. *Mercy* was the traditional term with reference to the eschatological hope of God's people (2 Macc. 2:7; Pss. Sol. 7:10; 8:27-28; 10:4, 7; 14:9; 17:45; 1 Enoch 1:8; 5:6; 27:4; 4 Ezra 14:34; Matt. 5:7; 2 Tim. 1:18; 1 Clem. 28:1). Not even the faithful Christian escapes final condemnation without the mercy of God. They do not escape the judgment of God by defining their own morality and assuming that the universe will respond accordingly but by embracing Jesus Christ and clinging to the mercy of God that is made available through the cross.

**22-23** As a result of the mercy they have received from God, they are to extend mercy to those who waver and struggle in the faith. The false teachers, meanwhile, are excusing themselves from the moral demands of the law and judgment of God and, in their hubris, condemning those who do not align to their own expectations.

As believers, our desires and efforts should be to snatch those wavering in the faith from the fire of damnation. "Snatching them out of the fire" is an allusion to Zech. 3:1-5 and Amos 4:11 and is also drawn from *The Testimony of Moses* in Jude 9. Jude does not mean that they are already in the fire but that they are on the brink of it and can be snatched back before they fall in.

Erring believers must be rebuked (Matt. 18:15-17; Luke 17:3; Gal. 6:1; 2 Thess. 3:15; Titus 3:10; Jas. 5:19-20) but with a love that seeks to rescue and restore. But balancing a fear of God with mercy is important when disciplining fellow believers. On the one hand, being merciful without fear of God can lead to too much sympathy for the person, absolving them of personal responsibility. On the other hand, a fear of God that lacks mercy can turn into personal judgment and condemnation that does not lead to restoration.

The imagery of the “clothes stained by the flesh” suggests that the things close to the sinners are contaminated by them, presumably during the process of sinning.

**24-25** Jude closes with a benediction, reminding and encouraging them of the power and love of God for them. Despite the presence of false teachers who seek to lead them astray, God is the one who enables them to stand and keep from stumbling (Ps. 38:16; 56:13; 66:9; 73:2; 91:12; 94; 116:8; 121:3). Because of this they are able to rejoice in the presence of God because He has made them without blemish [(Eph. 5:27; Col. 1:22; 1 Thess. 3:13) (sacrificial metaphor—Ex. 29:38; Lev. 1:3; 3:1; Heb. 9:14; 1 Pet. 1:19)]. No other God has done this for them, and so He is the only authority who deserves our glory and praise for all eternity.

## Bibliography

- Bauckham, Richard J. *Jude, 2 Peter*. Word Biblical Commentary series. Waco: Word Books, 1983.
- Davids, Peter H. *The Letters of 2 Peter and Jude*. The Pillar New Testament Commentary series. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2006.
- Green, Gene L. *Jude and 2 Peter*. Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament series. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008.
- Green, Michael. *The Second Epistle General of Peter and the General Epistle of Jude*. Tyndale New Testament Commentaries series. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1975.
- Kelly, J. N. D. *A Commentary on the Epistles of Peter and Jude*. Thornapple Commentaries series. Reprint ed. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1981.
- Moo, Douglas J. *2 Peter, Jude*. The NIV Application Commentary series. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1996.